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4 April 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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*Vietnam: (Information as of 4:30 AM EST)

Political Developments in South Vietnam: Premier Ky indicated publicly yesterday that troops would be sent to restore order in Da Nang, but refused to specify any timing.

Ky's remarks were made in the course of a press conference called to announce decisions by the Armed Forces Congress, the supreme governing body, at a meeting earlier in the day. Ky described Da Nang as "in the hands of the Communists," and said that the Da Nang mayor would be shot for complicity, if apprehended. He reported that domestic flights out of Saigon had been suspended so that aircraft could move troops if necessary.

[The apparently imminent government move to "retake" Da Nang represents a shift from earlier plans to give priority to dispatch of troops to the Hue area. The shift is almost certainly due to the greater danger of armed clashes in Hue, where a majority of the populace, including the police and the army's 1st Division, is Buddhist-influenced and apparently supports the antigovernment forces.]

It was also announced at yesterday's press conference that the government would convene, within a week, a national political congress, representing political parties, religions, and other groups, to organize a constituent body. General Thieu, answering questions on the congress, left the impression that it might lead to further modification of government plans. A prepared statement was also read by Premier Ky, strongly defending the military's efforts to accommodate popular aspirations, and warning against Communist attempts to turn the Vietnamese people against the US.



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There has been an angry reaction to the premier's press statements in Hue, where "struggle group" spokesmen are laying the blame on the US which "supports Catholic factions," and declaring that the people and troops in I Corps are ready to deal with Saigon's leaders.

Antigovernment demonstrations took place during the weekend in both Hue and Da Nang, where civil servants, police, and troops marched in deliberate defiance of disciplinary orders. In Saigon, a disorderly demonstration by Buddhist youths on the night of 2 April was finally dispersed by police using tear gas, after 400 demonstrators, some reportedly shouting pro - Ho Chi Minh slogans, penetrated the Saigon radio compound.

Demonstrations were also reported in several towns in II Corps, including Dalat, where students finally won temporary access to the local radio and persuaded authorities to order US troops to evacuate a resort hotel. A counterdemonstration by Catholic youths yesterday near Saigon may signal a new threat of possible religious clashes.

The Military Situation in South Vietnam: US forces are pressing several search-and-destroy operations in widely scattered areas of South Vietnam.

In the central highlands, US forces engaged in Operation LINCOLN yesterday came under enemy mortar fire in the Cambodian border area southwest of Pleiku Town. Viet Cong losses since the initiation of this operation on 24 March total 316 killed as against US losses of 33 killed and 88 wounded.

A recently mounted US Marine sweep south of Da Nang--Operation ORANGE--has made light sporadic contact with enemy units in the area. Viet Cong losses since 1 April total 37 killed while US casualties include 12 killed and 67 wounded.

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Southeast of Saigon, US Marines participating in Operation JACK STAY yesterday uncovered large Viet Cong installations, including a large hospital, a mine factory and numerous classrooms. The nature and extent of these facilities suggests that the Marines might be moving into a major Viet Cong base area.

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Argentina: The Secretariat of War's 1 April statement reaffirms the armed forces' role as watchdog over the government and serves notice that failure to solve the country's pressing economic ills could eventually trigger military intervention.

Echoing recent remarks by Secretary of War Castro Sanchez, the 1 April declaration affirms the army's determination to respect the constitution. It also warns opposition politicians not to look to the military to stage a coup in their behalf.

However, the statement ended by noting that the army is following with deep concern the difficulties confronting President Illia, including the recent strikes in Buenos Aires and Tucuman, floods in the Parana area, and the "uncertain electoral future." Thus, while the army has disavowed any action against the government of Illia in behalf of the opposition, it is reserving the right to act in the future.

The 1 April statement probably reflects the sentiments of a majority of Argentina's military leaders, including former commander in chief General Ongania. Ongania is known to hold that the army should be subservient to civilian rule, although he is reported to have agreed reluctantly to act as chief of government if intervention is required.

[The military have indicated in the past that a coup would be mounted only if the economic situation deteriorates drastically and there is a breakdown in public order.

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